

May is Older Americans Month. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens met to designate May as "Older Americans Month". Every President since Kennedy has issued a formal proclamation asking that the entire nation pay tribute in some way to older persons in their community during the month of May. This year's theme is Communities of Strength.

Older adults have built resilience and strength over their lives through successes, failures, joys, and difficulties. Their stories and contributions help to support and inspire others. This year we want to focus on the power of connection and engagement in building strong communities. Connecting with others plays a vital role in our health and well-being.

At some point in older adult life, many individuals find themselves with a sense of loneliness and a feeling of disconnect. Whether they are newly single or find their circle of friends dwindling as they age, losing social connections can be detrimental to mental and physical health.

The good news is there are many ways to build social connections and make new friends, even later in adult life.

1. Join an Active Adult Community/Club. Visit local senior centers websites for calendar of events. Senior Centers often host card games, art classes, reading groups, exercise classes, bingo, presentations and more. They even offer lunch.
  - a. Follow this link for a list of the senior centers in eastern Idaho:  
<https://www.idahoaging.com/providers/senior-centers/index.html>
2. Volunteer. Volunteering can be incredibly rewarding. Not only are volunteers doing something positive in their community, but it is also a great way to meet like-minded people. Find volunteer opportunities that are a good fit for you.
  - a. VolunteerMatch.org
  - b. Justserve.org
3. Take Classes. You're never too old to learn something new. Taking advantage of continuing-education classes at nearby colleges or universities can be beneficial to keeping the mind sharp as well as for meeting other people.
  - a. Workforce Training and Continuing Education – College of Eastern Idaho
  - b. Fit and Fall Proof group exercise classes – Eastern Idaho Public Health
  - c. Art Museum of Eastern Idaho
  - d. University of Idaho Extension
4. Contact Old High School or College Friends. We all have great friends from high school or college who we have fallen out of touch with over the years. Why not reconnect and rekindle those friendships by reaching out to those people? Thanks

to technology, doing so has never been easier. Social media sites make quick work of finding old friends.

- a. Facebook
- b. Twitter
- c. Instagram

5. *Check out activities at Local Libraries.* Local libraries can be a gold mine for free, fun activities. Oftentimes, libraries will host activities such as lectures, movies, computer classes, book clubs and chess clubs. Connecting with a local library is as easy as visiting their website to check out their calendar of events.

With a little bit of effort, you can find plenty of opportunities to socialize and get connected.

